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Message from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mike Sullivan

It's Women's History Month and I am proud to work alongside so many great women leaders at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). At NRCS, we are very proud of the women who make up our workforce. We recognize how they always demonstrate the strength, capacity and tenacity needed to achieve the goals they set for their careers. We also celebrate the assistance they provide to our customers in helping them get conservation on the ground.

We also honor and pay tribute to the accomplished, visionary, and trailblazing women farmers, ranchers, and foresters who provide the food and fiber to help feed the

world. They serve as an inspiration of expanded opportunity and endless possibilities for all women and girls. Take time to support the many activities taking place around Arkansas in commemoration of Women's History Month and the many contributions women producers have made to Arkansas, national and global conservation.

USDA Service Center Masking Update

The new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Community Conditions guide mask wearing as follows:

- **Low and Medium:** No masks are required, but USDA employees, customers and USDA Service Center visitors are welcome to continue wearing a mask if they choose.
 - USDA Service Centers may eliminate the requirement for customers to have an appointment to visit and unlock main doors.
- **Visitor Attestation:** Is only being required in High COVID case Counties (where masks are required). If the CDC says a community is in the High category, then masks must be worn. In Low and Medium Counties, the visitor form is no longer required.

COVID-19 Community Levels can help communities and individuals make decisions based on their local context and their unique needs. Check your county's [COVID-19 Community Level](#). For additional information and to locate your local USDA Service Center log on to <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

USDA to Extend Application Deadlines for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity

The USDA is extending the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity after requests from many stakeholders. USDA began accepting project applications for fiscal year 2022 on Feb. 7, 2022, and since then, the Department has heard from many stakeholders that an extension would allow them to prepare more robust applications to further development of climate-smart markets for a diverse range of producers. The new deadlines to apply via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. ET:

- First Funding Pool – May 6, 2022 Proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million
- Second Funding Pool – June 10, 2022 Proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999

Visit [usda.gov](#) for additional information, including details on Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and resources to support your application.

American agriculture is very diverse, so we also want the program to be reflective of this, and USDA is committed to equity in program delivery. Therefore, we are strongly encouraging partners to apply that serve small or historically underserved producers. Please see additional information in this newsletter on how USDA is investing in climate-smart commodity markets.

Important Dates to Remember

Regional Conservation Partnership Program: Project proposals for both components of Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) accepted through April 13, 2022. View the funding opportunity for RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements on www.grants.gov.

Conservation Plan Deadline for General Conservation Reserve Program Signup 58 - Deadline for producers to request a conservation plan from NRCS. County Office deadline to enter the status in (Conservation Online System) COLS as "Submit for Plan".

East Arkansas Delta RCPP: Lee, St. Francis, Monroe & Phillips County Farmers and Landowners in the East Arkansas Delta RCPP project who submit applications for Conservation Planning Assistance by April 29 will receive priority. For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact your local USDA Service Center.

FY22 Arkansas Technical Assistance Projects Notice of Funding Opportunity USDA-NRCS-AR-MULTI-22-NOFO0001138 - Arkansas NRCS State Office is seeking support from and opportunities to partner with likeminded natural resource conservation partners. The overall intent of this solicitation is to solicit partnerships to provide technical services that address the key conservation objectives and focus areas described further in this document. **Assistance Listing:** 10.902 Soil and Water Conservation, 10.912 Environmental Quality Incentives Program, 10.924 Conservation Stewardship Program, 10.931 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, 10.069 Conservation Reserve Program, and 10.903 Soil Survey Program. Applicants must submit their applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on Friday, April 29, 2022. For technical issues with Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.

Message from Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Doris Washington

Greetings

USDA will host the first public meeting of the inaugural Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on **March 23-24, 2022** from **11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. est.** The public is encouraged to attend and should [register by March 18, 2022](#). The new committee is part of USDA's efforts to support urban agriculture, creating a network for feedback. [Members were announced](#) last month.

FSA has additional flexibilities to assist borrowers. If the agency provided incorrect guidance to an existing direct loan borrower, the agency may provide equitable relief to that borrower. FSA may assist the borrower by allowing the borrower to keep their loans at current rates or other terms received in association with the loan which was determined to be noncompliant or the borrower may receive other equitable relief for the loan as the Agency determines to be appropriate. USDA encourages producers to reach out to their local loan officials to ensure they fully understand the wide range of loan and servicing options available that can assist them in starting, expanding or maintaining their operation. Additional information is available in the March 8, 2022 [rule on the Federal Register](#).

Hog producers who sold hogs through a spot market sale during the COVID-19 pandemic now have until **April 15, 2022**, to submit their applications for the Spot Market Hog Pandemic Program (SMHPP). The original deadline to submit applications was Feb. 25, 2022.

Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the ARC/PLC programs for the 2022 crop year have until **March 15, 2022**, to sign a contract. These two safety net programs provide vital income support to farmers experiencing substantial declines in crop prices or revenues.

Agricultural producers who have coverage under most crop insurance policies are eligible for a premium benefit from USDA if they planted cover crops during this crop year. The Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), offered by USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA), reduces producers' overall premium bills and helps them maintain their cover crop systems. PCCP is part of USDA's [Pandemic Assistance for](#)

[Producers](#) initiative, a bundle of programs to bring financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and producers who are feeling the impact of COVID-19 market disruptions.

To find their local FSA office, producers can visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Visit www.farmers.gov to learn more.

Some see dirt, others see potential. It's all in how you view it.

Until next time...

USDA Sets April 15 Application Cutoff for CSP Renewals

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., March 16, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service is accepting Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) renewal applications through April 15. During the first half of the fifth year of the existing contract term, NRCS may allow a participant to apply and compete to renew their contract for an additional 5-year period. NRCS is mailing contract renewal notification letters to all participants whose contracts expire in 2022. These letters contain instructions on how to apply for CSP renewal.

- Participants with 2018 CSP contracts (Classic, Renewal, and RCPP-CSP) expiring December 31, 2022, can apply to renew their contracts for an additional five years if they agree to adopt additional activities to achieve higher levels of conservation on their lands.
- NRCS will assess and rank all renewal applications received on or before the renewal application cutoff date. Renewal applicants will compete within a separate state-established ranking pool, and NRCS will make funding selections based on ranking score and available funds.

Through CSP, NRCS helps private landowners build their business while implementing conservation practices that help ensure the sustainability of their entire operation.

"Producers who have questions about the CSP renewal instructions, should visit their local NRCS office," said Arkansas State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. "CSP is a great chance to continue building your operation's conservation portfolio and help us protect more of our state's natural resources."

For more information about conservation planning and programs to help treat natural resource issues on your land, visit www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov or your local USDA Service Center.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Accepting 2022 Applications for Conservation Planning Assistance in One Arkansas RCPP Project

Farmers and landowners in the East Arkansas Delta Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project in Arkansas can apply to receive conservation planning assistance in fiscal year 2022.

Technical assistance is available for agriculture producers who want to work with NRCS and the East Arkansas Enterprise Community (EAEC) to develop a voluntary conservation

plan. These are free plans that identify potential natural resource problems, evaluate alternatives, and recommend solutions that could make use of the land more effective and sustainable.

This planning effort is being conducted in advance of two years of financial assistance to be made available in the project area in 2023 and 2024. The anticipated financial assistance may help eligible participants offset a portion of the cost of implementing components of the conservation plans. Producers who request plans through this sign up and are treating project resource concerns may receive priority consideration for funding in future years.

Farmers and landowners in Lee, St. Francis, Monroe and Phillips counties who submit applications to their local NRCS office by April 29, 2022 will receive priority planning assistance.

“RCPP is a unique program that leverages non-federal investments brought by conservation partners to accelerate conservation in selected project areas,” said Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. “This approach helps us maximize use of our collective resources to address locally identified concerns.”

The East Arkansas Delta RCPP project will implement innovative, effective and compelling solutions for the primary resource concerns related to land improvement/management/restoration of row crop and alternative crop producers and landowners in Lee, St. Francis, Monroe and Phillips counties. The objectives are to provide technical and financial assistance to all eligible producers and landowners, including socially disadvantaged producers and landowners in four select StrikeForce counties to improve their resource management and cropping systems and to help producers and landowners to identify the conservation activities they need to solve their conservation problems and install appropriate innovative conservation practices to decrease water quality degradation; improve habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates; and reduce excess/insufficient water/drought.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment.

Online services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in. Online NRCS services are available to customers through the [Conservation Client Gateway](#) link which can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents.

RCPP promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact by phone your local USDA/NRCS Field Service Center.

USDA Announces American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment to Benefit Underserved Farmers, Ranchers and Forest Landowners

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it is accepting grant applications for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Technical Assistance Investment Program to provide historically underserved farmers, ranchers and forest landowners technical support in accessing USDA programs and services.

“This past year, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken bold and historic actions to level the playing field to ensure ALL Americans benefit from the many opportunities open to them,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “As part of USDA’s American Rescue Plan investments, we want to ensure that those who have been traditionally underserved by USDA have the same understanding and technical support needed to access USDA programs and services. This is one of many steps USDA is taking as we continue to break down barriers and be more inclusive of all USDA customers.”

USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will provide, at a minimum, a \$25 million investment of American Rescue Plan funds, with awards normally ranging from \$500,000 to \$3.5 million for a five-year cooperative agreement. There is no anticipated overall maximum funding level. Applications are encouraged from partnerships and collaborations that are led by domestic nonprofit organizations and accredited public and nonprofit institutions of higher education with specialized expertise and a proven track record in working with underserved agricultural producers and/or the specific content for technical assistance. The deadline to submit applications is June 1, 2022.

Underserved communities of agricultural producers have not received the level of technical support that would benefit the launch, growth, resilience and success of their agricultural enterprises. Without meaningful technical assistance, producers are more likely to operate smaller, lower-revenue farms, have weaker credit histories and may lack clear title to their agricultural land, which increases difficulty in securing loans to own or operate their businesses and to ensure the success and resiliency of their operations.

In addition, USDA has comparatively fewer programs directed to supporting specialty crop production, which is a popular crop production choice for many producers and existing programs may not always be well-matched to the needs of small, diversified farms and ranches.

Common barriers experienced by small or underserved farms and ranches include challenges with accessing federal agricultural programs, including receiving information about available programs, difficulty navigating complex application processes, lack of standardization and transparency, limited knowledge of qualification requirements for all programs and complicated reporting requirements.

To address these inequities, technical assistance projects can provide technical support in many key areas, such as:

- Targeted agriculture financial training.
- Agriculture mediation access.
- Outreach about USDA programs and services.
- Agriculture cooperative development training and support.
- Capacity building training and land access technical support.
- Targeted support related to agriculture production.

- Agriculture credit and capital access.

As part of this program investment, technical assistance must be within a comprehensive program designed to reach defined audiences of underserved agricultural producers. Applicants are encouraged to consider and include youth-related and/or beginning farmer and rancher activities within the scope of their project, where applicable.

NIFA will hold an informational webinar to explain and answer questions about the application process. The webinar is open to interested potential applicants and will be held March 24 at 4 p.m. EDT. [Register for the webinar](#).

USDA intends to release a Request for Information (RFI) in the coming weeks to further inform this important work.

The Request for Applications can be reviewed on [Grants.gov](#) or the [NIFA](#) website.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

USDA Announces \$35 Million Funding Opportunity to Support Underserved and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced approximately \$35 million in available funding to community-based and nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and tribal entities that help historically underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers own and operate successful farms. Funding is made through the USDA's Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (also known as the 2501 Program). The 2501 Program is administered by the USDA Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement (OPPE).

"It has always been hard for the beginning farmer, the young farmer, the specialty crop grower to access and make use of USDA programs—and even more so for farmers of color who were denied access because of historical discrimination in farm programs," said OPPE Director Lisa Ramirez. "2501 funding helps historically underserved groups more fully access and participate in USDA programs and services."

For more than 30 years, and in partnership with organizations nationwide, the 2501 Program has helped reach historically underserved farmers and ranchers who have experienced barriers to service due to racial or ethnic prejudice. The 2014 Farm Bill expanded the program to include assistance to veteran farmers and ranchers. The 2018 Farm Bill increased mandatory funding for the program through fiscal year 2023. With 2501 funding, organizations conduct education, training, farming demonstrations, and conferences on farming and agribusiness, and increase access to USDA's programs and services.

Since 2010, the 2501 program has awarded 563 grants totaling more than \$158 million. Among recent FY 2021 grantees, the Kodiak Archipelago Leadership Institute received a 2501 grant to help establish a regional network of Alaska Native farmers in support of economic development and regional food security. Additionally, Georgia-based Stag Vets,

Inc. conducted institutes to train veterans and other students for careers in sustainable food production.

Eligible 2501 Program applicants include not-for-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and a range of higher education institutions serving African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

Visit the [2501 Program page](#) for more information on the 2501 funding opportunity.

Learn more through upcoming webinars:

Session 1: March 30, 2022, at 2 p.m. EDT – Register

at: www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_deGz0uf9TlyNPkuvRfxUA

Session 2: May 4, 2022, at 2 p.m. EDT – Register

at: www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_29_qm0hxTbeYw2l9e2QAfw

Call for Peer Review Panelists

USDA seeks qualified individuals to serve as peer reviewers to evaluate 2501 program proposals for fiscal year 2022. The peer review approach brings together diverse individuals who can provide fair, expert, and unbiased evaluation of proposals. The process ensures that grant projects are properly planned, competition is open and fair, proposed budgets are carefully examined, and grant awards are structured to protect the interests of the government. The entire review process will be conducted virtually for approximately three to four weeks. Selected reviewers will receive compensation. Visit the [OPPE website](#) for full details. If you are interested in serving on the peer review panel, and your affiliated organization is not applying for a 2501 grant, please send your resume and summary of qualifications to 2501grants@usda.gov no later than April 15, 2022 for consideration.

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of announcements building momentum around USDA's historic commitment to root out generations of systemic racism, center equity in decision-making and policymaking, lower barriers to access and ensure USDA programming is inclusive of all employees and all customers. Learn more at www.usda.gov/equity.

New Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture to Meet March 23-24

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will host the first public meeting of the inaugural Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on March 23-24, 2022. The public – including urban producers – is encouraged to attend.

"I look forward to working with this new urban agriculture federal advisory committee," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The committee's valuable insights and expertise will provide critical guidance to help us better serve urban agricultural producers, strengthen local food systems, and increase equity and access to healthy, local food."

The new federal advisory committee is part of USDA's efforts to support urban agriculture, creating a network for feedback. [Members were announced](#) last month, and include agricultural producers, and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing.

About the Meeting

USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is coordinating the meeting, which runs from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET on March 23 and 24, 2022. To attend, [register by March 18](#), 2022.

At the meeting, committee members will discuss administrative matters and consult on the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture grants.

Members of the public who wish to submit comments or questions related to urban agriculture may submit them via www.regulations.gov.

Comments must be submitted by March 18, 2022.

For special accommodations, please contact Leslie Glover at (602) 395-9536 or UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov.

Additional details are available in the [March 8, 2022, Federal Register](#) notice and online at farmers.gov/urban or on the [committee's webpage](#).

USDA and Urban Agriculture

The Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Grants that target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and policy development related to zoning and other urban production needs.
- Cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing \$260,000 for risk management training and crop insurance education for historically underserved and urban producers through partnerships between USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) and the University of Maryland, University of Connecticut, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems.
- Providing technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS).
- Organizing 11 [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) urban and suburban county committees. FSA will organize additional committees.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction.

More information is available at farmers.gov/urban and the new Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production website at www.usda.gov/partnerships/advisory-committee-urban-ag-innovative-production.

Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include grants from USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) and [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) as well as [FSA loans](#).

USDA to Extend Application Deadlines for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is extending the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity after requests from many stakeholders. [See the new deadlines and other information.](#)

Agricultural Producers Have Until March 15 to Enroll in USDA's Key Commodity Safety Net Programs

Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2022 crop year have until March 15, 2022, to sign a contract. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers these two safety net programs to provide vital income support to farmers experiencing substantial declines in crop prices or revenues.

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County or PLC, which are both crop-by-crop, or ARC-Individual, which is for the entire farm. Although election changes for 2022 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2022, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the March 15, 2022, deadline, the election remains the same as the 2021 election for crops on the farm. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the crop.

Producers have completed 976,249 contracts to date, representing 54% of the more than 1.8 million expected contracts.

Producers who do not complete enrollment by the deadline will not be enrolled in ARC or PLC for the 2022 crop year and will not receive a payment if triggered.

Producers are eligible to enroll farms with base acres for the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed, and wheat.

Decision Tools

In partnership with USDA, two web-based decision tools are available to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations:

- [Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator](#), a tool available through the University of Illinois allows producers to estimate payments for farms and counties for ARC-CO and PLC.
- [ARC and PLC Decision Tool](#), a tool available through Texas A&M that allows producers to estimate payments and yield updates and expected payments for 2022.

Crop Insurance Considerations and Decision Deadline

ARC and PLC are part of a broader safety net provided by USDA, which also includes crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers on farms with a PLC election have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider; however, producers on farms where ARC is the election are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres for that crop on that farm.

Unlike SCO, the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by an ARC election. Producers may add ECO regardless of the farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres for that farm.

Producers should contact their crop insurance agent to make certain that the election and enrollment made at FSA follows their intention to participate in STAX or SCO coverage. Producers have until March 15, 2022, to make the appropriate changes or cancel their ARC or PLC contract.

More Information

In addition to the March 15 deadline for ARC and PLC, other important deadlines include:

- March 1, [Livestock Indemnity Program](#)
- March 11, [Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#)
- March 15, [Pandemic Cover Crop Program](#)
- March 25, [Dairy Margin Coverage](#)

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit the [ARC and PLC webpage](#) or contact their local USDA Service Center. In those service centers where COVID cases exceed safety levels, staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, email and other digital tools. Producers with [level 2 authentication access](#) can electronically sign contracts or may make arrangements to drop off signed contracts at the FSA county office. Because of the pandemic, some [USDA Service Centers](#) are open to limited visitors.

Linkage Requirements for Payments Received Under WHIP+ and/or QLA

If you received a payment under the Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program+ (WHIP+) or the Quality Loss Adjustment Program (QLA) for crop production and/or quality losses occurring in 2018, 2019, or 2020 crop years, you are required to meet linkage requirements by obtaining federal crop insurance or Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage at the 60/100 level, or higher, for both the 2022 and 2023 crop years.

When applying for WHIP+ or QLA, form FSA-895 (Crop Insurance and/or NAP Coverage Agreement) was submitted acknowledging the requirement to obtain federal crop insurance, if available, or NAP coverage if federal crop insurance is not available. The coverage requirement is applicable to the physical location county of the crop that received WHIP+ and/or QLA benefits.

Producers should not delay contacting their federal crop insurance agent or local county FSA Office to inquire about coverage options, as **failure to obtain the applicable coverage by the sales/application closing date will result in the required refund of WHIP+ benefits received on the applicable crop, plus interest.** You can determine if crops are eligible for federal crop insurance or NAP by [visiting the RMA website](#).

For more information, contact your local County USDA Service Center at or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Know your Final Planting Dates

All producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office for more information on the final planting date for specific crops. The final planting dates vary by crop, planting period and county so please contact your local FSA office for a list of county-specific planting deadlines. The timely planting of a crop, by the final planting date, may prevent loss of program benefits.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
 - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA's farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your local County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Borrower Training for Farm Loan Customers

Borrower training is available for all Farm Service Agency (FSA) customers. This training is required for all direct loan applicants, unless the applicant has a waiver issued by the agency.

Borrower training includes instruction in production and financial management. The purpose is to help the applicants develop and improve skills that are necessary to successfully operate a farm and build equity in the operation. It aims to help the producer become financially successful. Borrower training is provided, for a fee, by agency approved vendors. Contact your local FSA Farm Loan Manager for a list of approved vendors.



Arkansas USDA

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FSA Phone: 501-301-3000 FSA
Fax: 855-652-2082

NRCS Phone: 501-301-3100
NRCS Fax: 855-681-7044

www.farmers.gov
www.ar.fsa.usda.gov
www.nrcs.usda.gov

FSA State Executive Director
Doris Washington

NRCS State Conservationist
Mike Sullivan

Please contact your local Office for questions specific to your operation or county.

FSA State Committee Meeting: 2nd Wednesday and Thursday of each Quarter

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).